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Letter dated 3 August 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, as President of the Security Council for the month of August 2018, the United Kingdom has scheduled an open debate on 29 August on the topic "Maintenance of international peace and security: mediation and settlement of disputes".

The United Kingdom has prepared the attached concept note in preparation for the debate (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Karen **Pierce**

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Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 3 August 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Concept note for the Security Council's open debate entitled "Maintenance of international peace and security: mediation and settlement of disputes" (29 August 2018)

Background

1. In his address to the Security Council on 10 January 2017, the Secretary-General called for a surge in diplomacy for peace and asked the Security Council to make greater use of the options laid out in Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations on the pacific settlement of disputes, including mediation (S/PV.7857).

2. The peaceful settlement of disputes, including through mediation, remains a primary responsibility of Member States but in Chapter VI of the Charter, in particular articles 33 and 36, a clear role is set out for the Security Council in this area. It is important that the Security Council make effective use of those provisions, while closely cooperating with other relevant organs of the United Nations.

3. The United Nations defines mediation as "a process whereby a third party assists two or more parties, with their consent, to prevent, manage or resolve a conflict by helping them to develop mutually acceptable agreements (A/66/811, annex I)". The United Nations is playing a leading mediating role in several conflicts, supporting regional and subregional organizations in a number of contexts and assisting local mediation and conflict-resolution efforts in others, including through field missions.

Developments since the open debate in 2009

4. The Security Council last considered mediation and the peaceful resolution of conflicts in an open debate on 21 April 2009. That was followed by the adoption of a presidential statement (S/PRST/2009/8), which gave expression to the intention of the Security Council intention to remain engaged in all stages of the conflict cycle, including in support of mediation, and its readiness to explore further ways to reinforce the promotion of mediation as an important means for the pacific settlement of disputes.

5. There have been numerous developments in mediation since 2009. In his report on United Nations activities in support of mediation (A/72/115), which was issued in 2017 in response to a request by the General Assembly in resolution 72/304, the Secretary-General highlighted the growing complexity and internationalization of conflicts, the acceleration in the speed and spread of information and the increasing fragility of peace agreements. There has also been a rise in the number and diversity of mediation actors, with regional and subregional organizations and civil society playing an increasingly prominent role.

6. The United Nations has also taken steps to strengthen its mediation capabilities. Since the establishment of the Mediation Support Unit in 2006 and the Standby Team of Senior Mediation Advisers in 2008, the United Nations has expanded its mediation activities, providing assistance to a wide array of partners beyond the United Nations system, including regional organizations, Member States and non-governmental organizations. The United Nations has also invested in the provision of specialized training to help professionalize the field and, in 2017, the Secretary-General created the High-level Advisory Board on Mediation.

Mediation, prevention and the conflict cycle

7. Mediation plays an important role in sustaining peace throughout the conflict cycle. In addition to its importance for the management and resolution of conflicts, effective mediation plays a key role in conflict prevention. In a presidential statement issued in January 2018 (S/PRST/2018/1), the Security Council highlighted the importance of mediation as a tool for conflict prevention and encouraged the Secretary-General to continue enhancing the use of his good offices, dispatching representatives, special envoys and mediators, to help to facilitate durable, inclusive and comprehensive settlements.

Participation of women in mediation and conflict resolution

8. Mediation efforts and, more broadly, conflict prevention and resolution, are more successful when they are inclusive. As set out in Council resolution 1325 (2000), a key element of a more inclusive approach is greater meaningful participation by women, including as leaders and decision-makers. There needs to be more emphasis when designing peace processes on giving women and civil society groups opportunities to influence agreements, at the negotiating table and away from it.

9. The number of women mediators must be increased. Women made up just 2 per cent of mediators in major peace processes between 1990 and 2017.[1] In recent years, efforts have been made to tackle that underrepresentation, including through efforts by the Secretary-General to promote gender parity in the United Nations and the emergence of a number of regional women's mediation networks that bring together women with experience in peacemaking to share experience and expertise.

Objectives

10. The aim of this open debate is to provide Member States with the opportunity to consider the role of the United Nations in leading and supporting inclusive mediation efforts, how such efforts can be strengthened and how the Security Council and Member States can best support them. The debate will be informed by the experiences of Member States, through either their experience of mediation in conflicts to which they are a party or their own mediation efforts in third countries.

Questions

11. Key questions are:

(a) How can the Security Council more effectively support mediation as a means for the pacific settlement of disputes?

(b) How should Member States, the United Nations and the Security Council adapt their approach to mediation to take account of the changing nature of conflict and the increase in the number and diversity of mediation actors on the ground? In particular, how can they support the efforts led by regional and subregional organizations?

(c) What is the most effective approach to building mediation capacity at the local, national, sub-regional, regional and international levels?

(d) How can United Nations field missions most effectively support local mediation and conflict resolution efforts?

[1] See https://www.cfr.org/interactive/womens-participation-in-peace-processes.

(e) How can Member States, the United Nations and the Security Council more effectively support and strengthen the meaningful participation of women in mediation and conflict resolution?

Format

12. Lord Ahmad, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom, will chair the debate. The Secretary-General, the Most Reverend Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury (in his capacity as a member of the High-level Advisory Board) and a representative of civil society will brief the Council. A Chair's summary will be circulated after the open debate.